

Madison Heights Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ)

 149 Main Street  
Madison Heights, VA 24572

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## MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

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### *Marks of a True Christian*

The title *Marks of a True Christian* comes from the Harper Collins Study Bible as a heading for Romans 12:9-21. I noticed an interesting parallel between this particular Scripture and Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The reason for this is that the Apostle Paul addresses a community of believers that are being shaped by the words of Christ. Paul's perspective is that we are one body and Jesus Christ is the shaping force of that body. So, he uses the words of Christ as his guide for living his life and lessons to the people. He lists spiritual gifts and follows through with ways in which Christians are to live, act, and behave. These spiritual gifts are mainly concerned with building up others as opposed to the pursuit of individualism. At the top of list is love. Verse 9 starts off "let love be genuine" this means a lot of things including honesty and sincerity. This could be the biggest obstacle that Christians face today if we are influenced by our competitive culture and fail to use the words of Christ as our guide for daily living.

Years ago, I was engaged in a conversation with a pastoral colleague who told me a story about a problem he had experienced with his leadership role within his church. Somebody had criticized him behind his back. While he was talking I provided no advice. All he needed was somebody to understand and offer some support and, of course, he needed the opportunity to verbally express his frustrations. As he told me the details about how the person complained about him behind his back, I thought "this is the same old problem, people who gossip, people who complain, people who cut you down behind your back instead of coming to you; it is all the same old problem. Some people are more concerned with the pursuit of individualism and getting ahead of others than they are concerned with building up others." As we were saying goodbye I decided to express one final thought. I said "You know, some people just don't get it. They are active in the life of the church and are proud to claim the title of Christian but they fail to see how they are not living by the word. It's the same old problem. Ever since Adam and Eve wanted to do their own thing instead of God's thing, the problem runs all the way through the Old Testament, New Testament, throughout history, and into today."

We are one body of which Jesus Christ is the shaping force. The Apostle Paul taught Christian ethics. The marks of a true Christian are not a specific list of virtues. The marks of a true Christian are found in living your life guided by the words of Christ. My favorite questions are "What did Jesus say?" and "What did Jesus do?" Jesus relied on the word. The Scripture teaches that complaining about people is a direct contrast to genuine love. Showing honor to one another, blessing others, focusing on that which is noble, and living at peace with everyone comes from love. These are marks of a true Christian. I encourage you to pause and think about this and let it soak in. the things you do reflect back on you. Building up others automatically reflects back on you. The positive cultivation of enriching the lives of others reflects back on you. When we give of ourselves for the benefit of others, we bless them and often we help to meet needs that are unknown to us. There is no substitute for your offering of kindness. You can give of your time, your effort, and your energy to bless others in many ways; a reassuring touch, a sincere compliment, a helping hand, a smile, a compassionate ear. You can offer friendship, love, and acceptance. When you bless others you receive spiritual nurturing in return. Bless others, find ways to bless others; these are the marks of a true Christian.

Thank you,  
*George*